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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: EUROPE

EUROPE

1. "CIA flights stress America's allies"
The liberal Toronto Star editorialized (12/8): "...U.S. President George Bush's post-9/11 terror policy is so dismissive of international law and human rights that it has squandered the world's goodwill and strained relations with close allies. Washington's attitude toward torture is but one example. When U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Europeans this week that the U.S. 'does not permit, tolerate or condone torture,' she might have added that Bush opposes a Senate bid to bar the CIA from inflicting cruel and degrading treatment on prisoners. Human Rights Watch reports prisoners have faced 'vicious beatings' in U.S. custody, sexual degradation, near drowning and near asphyxiation, sleep deprivation and other abuses. Indeed, Washington contends the Geneva Conventions do not apply to terror suspects. U.S. troops at Abu Ghraib jail in Iraq took that to heart.... This is the

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troubling backdrop to reports that the CIA has operated secret prisons in Poland, Romania, Afghanistan, Thailand and North Africa, and has "rendered" suspects to places such as Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia where torture is not unknown. It's all been officially denied, of course. Canada objects to the CIA's 'renditions' - and with good reason. Maher Arar, an Ottawa engineer, was arrested in New York as a terror suspect, and promptly flown to Syria where he was tortured. The Canadian government must do what it can, within international law, to support the U.S. campaign against terror. The safety of our country is at stake. But we should not need to abandon the Geneva Conventions to curb terrorism. We should not need routinely to mete out rough treatment to prisoners, hold detainees indefinitely, place them before partisan tribunals and deport them to be tortured by proxies. At what point do we begin to look like those whom we scorn as lawless criminals? That is why Paul Martin should find out what the CIA is up to in our airspace. Maher Arar would have welcomed a little official vigilance."

2. "Rice's tortured logic on torture"

Editorial page editor emeritus Haroon Siddiqui commented in the liberal Toronto Star (12/8): "There's the nightmare of Iraq, and there are the Bush administration's other follies. Its use of torture has burst into the open in a more embarrassing fashion than before. We've known about Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and also 'renditions,' the sub-contracting of torture abroad (Maher Arar). We've heard of CIA operatives kidnapping suspects all over the globe and whisking them off in chartered flights to secret locations. The latest flap is over (1) the use of European air space and airports, in violation of European law, and perhaps Canadian airspace and airports as well, and (2) the CIA's reported use of Poland, a member of the European Union, and Romania, an EU aspirant, as sites for its clandestine jails.... Europe is upset, or pretends to be. Condoleezza Rice suggested the latter, during her current European tour. The more important issue is what's being done with the 'ghost detainees.' Enter Rice's tortured logic. The U.S., she said, does not send a detainee to 'where he or she will be tortured.'... They may be, but Washington does not know that they will be. Also, the U.S. 'does not authorize or condone torture.' It may Q.U.S. 'does not authorize or condone torture.' It may not authorize or condone it, but torture may still happen, even in the U.S. But it is not torture because

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the administration defines it as that which causes 'an organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death.' It's torture only if you are dead or nearly dead. Yet Dick Cheney wants the CIA exempted from a proposed Senate ban on torture because the agency wants to keep shipping people to countries that use torture. But since Washington does not know that they will be tortured.... If this was not convoluted enough, Rice declared yesterday that the U.S. has barred all personnel from engaging in cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, in conformity with the International Convention on Torture, to which the U.S. is a signatory. Is this a new policy or a new spin on an old one? We can only guess. But obfuscation can only take you so far.... Rice dodged the issue of the

flights. Her officials said she had not admitted a mistake in the Masri case. And her doubletalk on torture continues...."

3. "Evasive action"

The centrist Winnipeg Free Press opined (12/8): "In Europe this week, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had some difficulty defending American actions. That may be because she was unwilling to say that the U.S. has done anything that needs to be defended. The result has been an awkward embarrassment for her and the United States. The controversy involves a policy called 'extraordinary rendition' - under which, when U.S. law does not permit a captured terrorist to be charged, he is sent to another country where U.S. legal restrictions do not apply.... Many Europeans today are outraged by reports that the Central Intelligence Agency operates secret prisons in Eastern Europe and Asia, using secret flights routed through western European airports to transport the prisoners and that the use of torture is routine in these prisons and the rendition program. Ms. Rice's European tour was meant to pour oil on these troubled waters, but she has not been very effective. She has said that the U.S. does not authorize or condone the use of torture, that the unspecified techniques it does use may be extraordinary but that they are necessary in the war on terror. Statements meant to clarify the issue have instead added to the confusion and further inflamed European opinion against the U.S. As report after report adds to the public controversy, it remains unclear exactly what the United States is doing, if, indeed, it is doing anything, and where it is doing it. It is yet another example of the Bush administration's

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knack for fuelling a crisis even as it tries to contain it. A more useful tactic, for Washington and the world would be if Ms. Rice were to explain how Washington justifies extraordinary rendition and what methods are used to implement it - and how it defends those methods. Continued evasion and obfuscation by Washington can only enforce the growing suspicion that the U.S. is engaged in something that it does not believe it can defend before the public in Canada, in Europe or in America."

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

4. "Press U.S. on softwood"

The centrist Winnipeg Free Press editorialized (12/8):

"The United States made a significant retreat this week in its trade war with Canada over softwood lumber: It reduced by almost half the rate of import duty it charges on Canadian lumber. But the U.S. did not agree that it has to comply with Canada-U.S. arbitration panel conclusions. As a result, the immediate financial stakes in the lumber dispute were reduced but the threat to NAFTA - the North American Free Trade Agreement - remained undiminished.... U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Ambassador David Wilkins have for months been urging Canada to stop objecting to U.S. policy and quietly negotiate a solution.

Presumably what they had in mind was an agreed ceiling on shipments of Canadian lumber into the U.S. along the lines of the Softwood Lumber Agreement that regulated the trade from 1996 to 2001.... Despite the previous advice of Ms. Rice and Mr. Wilkins, the duty reduction was decided by the United States in a context of NAFTA and World Trade Organization rulings and Canadian badgering. It was not achieved through negotiation. Qbadgering. It was not achieved through negotiation. Once the United States starts complying with NAFTA, it could be logical to negotiate a new, mutually beneficial Canada-U.S. agreement on the softwood lumber trade. While the U.S. continues to disregard NAFTA, however, it is illogical to negotiate a new agreement. Canada should press its claim for full restitution of the lumber duties previously paid. That is the way to find out whether NAFTA panel conclusions will be upheld by U.S. courts of law."

WILKINS

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